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FOR

UNIFIED MESSAGING SYSTEM CONFIGURED FOR MANAGEMENT OF SHORT MESSAGE
SERVICE-TYPE MESSAGES

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UNIFIED MESSAGING SYSTEM CONFIGURED FOR MANAGEMENT OF SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE-TYPE MESSAGES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to unified messaging systems configured for receiving, storing, and supplying messages to a subscriber, independent of message format or the type of device used by the sender of the message or the subscriber accessing the messages.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

The evolution of the public switched telephone network has resulted in a variety of voice applications and services that can be provided to individual subscribers and business subscribers. Such services include voice messaging systems that enable landline or wireless subscribers to record, playback, and forward voice mail messages. However, the ability to provide enhanced services to subscribers of the public switched telephone network is directly affected by the limitations of the public switched telephone network. In particular, the public switched telephone network operates according to a protocol that is specifically designed for the transport of voice signals; hence any modifications necessary to provide enhanced services can only be done by switch vendors that have sufficient know-how of the existing public switched telephone network infrastructure.

Short Message Services (SMS) have been implemented in wireless telephone communications systems as a way to send a message to a subscriber's wireless phone. SMS messages have become quite popular recently, due in part from wireless telephone service providers offering SMS as a free service in conjunction with wireless telephony services; hence, many wireless subscribers have developed a preference to communicating using SMS as opposed to more costly wireless voice services. A messaging server, also referred to as a Short Message Service Center (SMSC), is configured for receiving an SMS message from a messaging source according to Short Message Peer to Peer Protocol (SMPP). The messaging source may be, for example, a cellphone supplying a user-input message, or an e-mail interface resident within the wireless telephone communications system. The SMSC, in response to receiving the SMS message from the messaging source, transmits a short message to the cellular phone based on the destination telephone number

specified within the notification message. However, this arrangement still provides only limited flexibility in enabling different sources to send an SMS message to a cellular phone. In addition, existing cellphones are limited by memory to storing up to ten SMS messages. Moreover, this arrangement limits the ability of an SMS subscriber having a cellphone to send messages to a destination that does not have an SMS-capable cellphone.

Unified communications systems are under development as a way of enhancing messaging services for users such as wireless telephone subscribers. A disadvantage of unified communications systems implemented as enhanced versions of the voice mail system, paging system, or e-mail interface resident within the wireless telephone communications system is that such implementation requires detailed knowledge of the proprietary protocols associated with the voice mail systems. Hence, such implementations are available only from switch vendors having knowledge of the proprietary protocols.

Use of a unified communications system implemented independent of the existing proprietary voice mail systems enables service providers to use scalable and distributed systems using recognized communication protocols. Hence, the service providers may use such unified communications systems across multiple platforms, independent of protocol, for storage of various types of messages, for example voice messages, facsimile, and e-mail stored in a centralized messaging store. However, existing unified communications systems still have not address the need for integrating SMS messaging within the unified messaging scheme; hence, unified messaging subscribers have not been able to fully utilize the beneficial features of sending and receiving SMS messages.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

There is a need for an arrangement that enables open standards-based unified messaging systems to receive, store, and/or send unified messages for a SMS messaging subscriber.

There also is a need for an arrangement that enables an open standards-based unified messaging system to store SMS messages for a unified messaging subscriber for retrieval by a user access device independent of device protocol.

There also is a need for an arrangement that enables an SMS subscriber to send an SMS message to multiple destinations based on a prescribed distribution list.

There also is a need for an arrangement that enables a unified messaging subscriber to retrieve stored messages based on transfer of the stored messages to the unified messaging subscriber according to SMS message protocol.

These and other needs are attained by the present invention, where a unified communications system is configured for receiving, storing, and/or sending SMS messages based on management of the SMS messages according to a prescribed open standards-based protocol. The unified communications system includes an SMS module configured for receiving SMS messages according to SMPP protocol. The SMS module obtains source and destination information from the received SMS message, and accesses a subscriber profile directory for subscriber profile information based on at least one of the source and destination information. The SMS module generates a common format message that includes the SMS message, and selectively supplies the common format message to selected destinations based on the accessed subscriber profile information. The common format message may be stored in a prescribed message store, for example an IMAP directory, or output as an e-mail message to a prescribed destination. The SMS module also is configured for selectively supplying stored messages to a unified messaging subscriber as an SMS message based on the profile information on the unified messaging subscriber. Hence, the unified communications system enables SMS messaging users to send SMS messages to non SMS-type devices (e.g., telephones, e-mail clients, etc.) and retrieve stored common format messages (e.g., fax, e-mail, voice messages) using the SMS message system.

One aspect of the present invention provides a method in a server. The method includes receiving a short message service (SMS) message according to short message peer-to-peer (SMPP) protocol. The method also includes accessing a subscriber directory, according to an open network protocol, for subscriber attribute information based on the received SMS message. The server generates, based on the subscriber attribute information, at least one common format message that includes the SMS message, and supplies the common format message to a selected destination according to a selected access protocol based on the subscriber attribute information. The generation of a common format message that includes the SMS message enables storage of the SMS message

in unified message stores configured for storing unified messages for subscribers, for example according to IMAP protocol. Moreover, the generation of a common format message enables the SMS message to be sent to a destination according to any subscriber-selected protocol, for example as an e-mail message, a fax message, a voice message using text to speech resources, etc..

5 Another aspect of the present invention provides a server comprising a short message service (SMS) module, a first interface resource, and a second interface resource. The SMS module is configured for receiving SMS messages according to short message peer to peer (SMPP) protocol, and also is configured for generating a query for subscriber attribute information based on the received SMS message, and generating at least one common format message based on the subscriber
10 attribute information and that includes the SMS message. The first interface resource is configured for accessing the subscriber attribute information based on the query from a subscriber directory according to a prescribed open network protocol, and the second interface resource is configured for outputting the at least one common format message according to at least one of SMTP protocol and IMAP protocol.

Additional advantages and novel features of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows and in part will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon examination of the following or may be learned by practice of the invention. The advantages of the present invention may be realized and attained by means of instrumentalities and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Reference is made to the attached drawings, wherein elements having the same reference numeral designations represent like elements throughout and wherein:

25 Figure 1 is a block diagram illustrating a unified messaging system configured for sending and receiving SMS messages for storage in a unified message store according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 is a diagram illustrating the generation of a common format message used for storage of a received SMS message in the unified message store of Figure 1 according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C are diagrams summarizing the method of processing SMS messages by the unified messaging server of Figure 1 according to an embodiment of the present invention.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Figure 1 is a block diagram illustrating an architecture that provides unified messaging services via an IP network according to an embodiment of the present invention. The architecture includes an SMSC 10 configured for sending and receiving SMS messages to wireless SMS devices 12, and for selectively forwarding SMS messages to peer systems via SMPP protocol. The architecture also includes a unified messaging system 20 configured for receipt, storage, and retrieval of messages stored in a subscriber message store 22, independent of the message type. An exemplary implementation of the unified messaging system 20 is the commercially available Cisco Unified Open Network Exchange (Cisco uOne) (Products UONE-FOUND 4.1S, and UONE-VOICEMSG4.1S) from Cisco Systems, Inc.

The inventors have realized that SMS messages can be managed as true message types that can be received, stored, and retrieved from the unified messaging system 20. In particular, the disclosed embodiment contemplates enhancing the existing Cisco uOne system by addition within the unified messaging system 20 of an SMS module 24 configured for sending and receiving SMS messages via SMPP protocol.

In addition, the SMS module 24 is configured for accessing standardized application programming interfaces (APIs) 26 executable within the unified messaging system 20. Hence, the SMS module 24 is able to access an LDAP API 26b for subscriber profile information from a subscriber directory 28 according to LDAP protocol: such subscriber profile information may include subscriber notification preferences, as well as distribution lists established by the subscribers. Hence, the SMS module 24 can generate multiple SMS messages for respective destinations based on reception of an SMS message that specifies a subscriber distribution list. In addition, the SMS

module 24 is able to access the IMAP message store 22 via an IMAP API 26a for storage of SMS messages in a common format recognizable by the IMAP message store 22, enabling the SMS message to be stored and retrieved as part of the unified messages managed by the unified messaging system 20.

5 Figure 2 is a diagram illustrating the generation of a common format message 40 (e.g., an e-mail message) from a received SMS message 42 by the SMS module 24. The SMS module 24 is configured for generating an e-mail message by enclosing the SMS message 42 (typically composed of unicode text) within the body 50 of a Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension (MIME) wrapper 52. In particular, the MIME wrapper 52 includes a MIME header 46 having a type field 48 that specifies
10 the message type within the body 50.

 The SMS module 24 is configured for inserting the SMS message 42 into the body 50, and specifying within the type field 48 a designation that identifies the unicode text within the body 50 as an SMS message type. The MIME wrapper 52 is then attached to a common format, e-mail message 40 having source and destination address fields selected based on subscriber profile information within the LDAP directory 28 accessed by the SMS module 24. For example, the e-mail message 40 may be output by the SMS module 24 for storage in the IMAP message store 22, either in the sending party's "sent" folder, or within at least one destination party's "inbox" folder, and possibly within a subdirectory for SMS messages. Alternatively, the e-mail message 40 may be output via an SMTP API 26c according to SMTP protocol to another remote messaging server (e.g., another unified messaging system 20), enabling the SMS message to be sent to a destination SMSC in a manner that bypasses existing SMPP links.

 Hence, the generation of the common format message 40 for storage of the SMS message 42 in an IMAP message store 22 enables the unified messaging system 20 to receive and send SMS messages, as needed. Hence, the SMS module 24 enables the SMS messages 42 to be handled as
25 any other unified message, such as a voice message, an e-mail message, a fax, etc.. For example, text to speech (TTS) services 52 can be used by the SMS module 24 to convert the unicode text within the SMS message 42 into a stored voice message for a subscriber.

 In addition, the SMS module 24 can generate a new SMS message based on retrieval of a unified message from the IMAP message store 22 of a selected subscriber. For example, stored voice

messages can be converted to unicode text format for generation of a new SMS message 54 using available speech to text (STT) resources 56. Alternatively, the new SMS message 54 may be generated based on recovery of the unicode text obtained from another SMS message 42 received by the SMS module 24.

5 The SMS module 24 may also generate the SMS message 54 as part of a notification service for a subscriber, enabling a subscriber to obtain a daily status of stored messages within the IMAP message store 22, illustrated in further detail below. Hence, the SMS module 24 provides two-way conversion for SMS messages, where a received SMS message 42 is stored in a common format e-mail message 40, and where a common format e-mail message having a stored message in a prescribed format (e.g., voice) is converted to unicode text for generation of a new SMS message 10 54 to be supplied to the subscriber.

Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C are diagrams summarizing SMS operations performed by the SMS module 24, including storing a received SMS message according to a prescribed distribution list, generating an SMS message including a list of stored messages for an identified subscriber, and supplying a stored message to a subscriber using an SMS message, respectively. The steps described in Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C can be implemented as executable code stored on a computer readable medium (e.g., a hard disk drive, a floppy drive, a random access memory, a read only memory, an EPROM, a compact disc, etc.).

The method of Figure 3A begins in step 60, where a sending party using a mobile phone or other SMS capable device (e.g., a wireless personal digital assistant) 12 sends a short message to the SMSC 10. The SMSC 10 accesses SMS subscriber information in step 62 from an SMS subscriber directory 11 based on the source address (SA) or destination address (DA) specified within the SMS message. If neither source address nor destination address specify auto forwarding to the unified messaging system 20, the SMSC sends the short message in step 64 to the wireless device specified by the destination address; however if the SMS subscriber information in the SMS subscriber directory 11 specifies that either the source address or destination address wants a copy of the SMS message forwarded to the unified messaging system 20, the SMSC 10 also sends a copy of the short message in step 66 to the unified messaging server 20 via SMPP protocol.

SMS message. The method begins in step 86, where the unified messaging server 20 receives the request for an SMS based retrieval of a selected message. The request may be received in the form of another SMS message, or alternately as any other type of unified request recognized during a messaging session with the subscriber (e.g., web based messaging session, voice based messaging session, etc.).

The SMS module 24 accesses the selected message from the subscriber's IMAP directory 22 in step 88, and determines in step 90 whether the MIME type 48 specifies that the body 50 includes an SMS message. If the MIME type 48 specifies an SMS message type, the SMS module 24 extracts in step 92 the SMS message from the body 50 of the MIME wrapper 46 attached to the e-mail message 40 for generation of the new SMS message 54. However if in step 90 the MIME type specifies another type of message, the SMS module 24 converts in step 94 the message to unicode text format, for example using speech to text (STT) resources 56. The SMS module 24 outputs the new SMS message 54 in step 96 via SMPP for delivery to the subscriber's SMS enabled device.

According to the disclosed embodiment, a unified messaging system includes an SMS module that enables the unified messaging system to receive and store SMS messages as unified messages in a standardized message store. Moreover, the unified messaging system can generate SMS messages, based on subscriber preferences, enabling users to receive any type of stored message (e.g., voice, fax, e-mail, etc.) using an SMS enabled device.

While this invention has been described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments, but, on the contrary, is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.